



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

October 2, 2005

News Release

ICE ARRESTS 2 CUBANS FOR ALLEDGED HUMAN SMUGGLING

Suspects Conspired to Smuggle Seven other Cubans to Puerto Rico.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – Two Cuban nationals who allegedly attempted to smuggle seven other Cubans into the United States are in federal custody for alien smuggling. Carlos Ozete-Crespo, 38, and Rafael Fleitas-Rojo were arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents yesterday for violations to United States Code (USC) 18 section 1324.

Allegedly, the group of Cubans arrived from the Dominican Republic on board a 30-foot vessel and were dropped off near Boquerón Beach in the vicinity of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. ICE agents worked with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol agents to identify Ozete-Crespo and Fleitas-Rojo as the alleged captains of this smuggling venture. Both have outstanding arrest warrants in the state of Florida.

“Smugglers who think that Puerto Rico is an easy gateway to the continental United States are sorely mistaken,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Puerto Rico office. “We will continue our investigative efforts to dismantle alien smuggling organizations whose only goal is to profit at the expense of others. Smugglers will be found, and will face the consequences to the

The U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico has accepted the case for prosecution and the ICE investigation into this smuggling ring is ongoing. Ozete-Crespo and Fleitas-Rojo are in ICE custody and have been transferred to the Metropolitan Detention Center in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico where they await for the outcome of this case. The other seven Cubans remain at the ICE detention center in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

Disrupting and dismantling human smuggling and trafficking rings has been a top priority for ICE since the agency was established in March 2003, given the potential threat that these organizations pose both to national security and public safety. With ICE’s broad authorities for enforcing immigration and customs laws and its expertise in financial investigations, the agency is able to pursue human smuggling organizations more aggressively than ever before. As a result, ICE agents arrested more than 1,630 human smugglers nationwide in Fiscal Year 2004.

The public is reminded that a criminal complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial and the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.